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Message Text

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42
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 OES-03 HEW-02 CU-02 SCCT-01 SY-05

A-01 OPR-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /112 W
---------- 003501
R 022059Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2622
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN
AMCONSUL CALI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 0050

EO: 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT ECON ETRD SDOP
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LOPEZ REVIEWED THE ADMINISTRA-

TIONS'S ACHIEVEMENTS DURING 1976. HE SUGGESTED A NUMBER OF ELEC-

TORAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES IN THE GOC. FONMIN LIEVANO WAS IN WASHINGTON, EVIDENTLY TO CONFER WITH AMBASSADOR TURBAY ON LIBERAL PARTY MATTERS. CARDINAL MUNOZ SCORED BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMS AND COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN THE NATION'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. BOGOTA'S WAVE OF BOMBINGS CONTINUED. THE FINAL INFLATION FIGURES FOR 1975 SHOWED IMPROVEMENT. END SUMMARY

2. LOPEZ MAKES YEAR-END ADDRESS. LOPEZ, IN A YEAR-END ADDRESS (BOGOTA 18), REVIEWED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HIS GOVERNMENT IN 1975, HIGHLIGHTING TAX REFORMMEASURES, AGREEMENTS WITH ECUADOR AND PANAMA, JBD THE REDUCTION IN THE RATE OF INFLATION TO 18 PER
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CENT. HE CRITICIZED MIDDLE LEVEL GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONARIES FOR

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ATTENDING TO THEIR OWN INTERESTS INSTEAD OF THOSE OF THE NATION AND HE TOOK THE BUREAUCRACY AND TEACHERS TO TASK FOR "DEVOURING" INCREASED TAX REVENUES BY "EXTORTING" HIGH PAY RAISES OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT. LOPEZ PROMISED THAT IN 1976 ADDITIONAL REVENUES WOULD BE EARMARKED FOR SUCH THINGS AS HEALTH PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION. THE PRINCIPAL PORTION OF HIS MESSAGE WAS DEVOTED TO A PROPOSAL FOR A LIMITED CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION IN 1978 TO REFORM THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND DEPARTMENTAL GOVERNMENTS. HE ALSO SUGGESTED A SEPARATION OF 1978 ELECTIONS: ONE FOR PRESIDENT AND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION DELEGATES AND OTHER FOR ALL

OTHER ELECTIVE OFFICES. LOPEZ FAILED TO MAKE MENTION OF THE CURRENT STATE OF SIEGE OR HIS EARLIER PROMISE TO TERMINATE IT SOON. NEITHER DID HE REFER TO HIS VISIT TO THE U.S. THE ADDRESS WAS WELL RECEIVED IN GENERAL AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES SPECIFICALLY ENDORSED THE IDEA OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS U.S. FONMIN LIEVANO IS DUE TO RETURN JANUARY 2 FROM A TEN-DAY VISIT TO THE U.S. LIEVANO'S TRIP APPEARS TO HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH FOREIGN RELATIONS BUT, RATHER,

TO BE CONCERNED WITH LIBERAL PARTY POLITICS. THE ABORTIVE PARTY CONVENTION IN DECEMBER BROUGHT INTO SHARP FOCUS THE FACTIONALISM IN THE MAJORITY PARTY. SINCE ONE OF THE STRONGEST GROUPS IS THAT LED BY AMBASSADOR TURBAY, CONSULTATIONS WITH THE AMBASSADOR (AND PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL) APPEAR NECESSARY. LIEVANO, LONG AN IMPORTANT LIBERAL PARTY FIGURE, HAS BEEN MENTIONED FREQUENTLY IN RECENT WEEKS, AS EITHER THE NEW PARTY CHIEF OR AS ONE OF A TRIUMVIRATE TO HEAD THE FACTIONALIZED PARTY. IN THE EVENT THAT HE DOES TAKE ON SUCH RESPONSIBILITY, IT IS PROBABLE THAT HE WOULD RESIGN AS FOREIGN MINISTER.

4. CARDINAL MUNOZ DENOUNCES BIRTH CONTROL, MARXIST EDUCATORS AND POOR SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN COLOMBIA. IN A YEAR-END MESSAGE DECEMBER 28, CARDINAL ANIBAL MUNOZ DUQUE LABELED BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMS IN COLOMBIAN BEING CONDUCTED BY PROFAMILIA AS CRIMINAL CAMPAIGNS. HE SAID THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD AND CALLED ON RESPONSIBLE COLOMBIANS TO REJECT THE "NEO-MALTHUSIAN THINKING" WHICH HAS LED TO MASSIVE CAMPAIGNS OF CONFIDENTIAL

ANTI-CONCEPTIVE PROGRAMS, INCLUDING INDISCRIMINATE STERILIZATION AND VASECTOMIES. THE CARDINAL REFERRED TO SEVERAL STATISTICS PREPARED EARLIER IN THE YEAR BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (ANIF) TO UNDERSCORE HIS CONCERN FOR THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN COLOMBIA. HE POINTED OUT THAT 86.4 PERCENT OF THE WORKING POPULATION IN COLOMBIAN EARN LESS THAN 1,500 PESOS MONTHLY (APPROXIMATELY US$47). IN BOGOTA, HE SAID, 25 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE NEVER EAT MEAT, AND 52 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION LIVE

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IN SLUMS, WHICH COVER 60 PERCENT OF THE CITY. "THIS SITUATION CHALLENGES ALL OF US AND WE CANNOT ISOLATE OURSELVES FROM THE ALARMING MORAL DECADENCE AND FROM THE INSECURITY "WHICH THE UNFORTUNATE CONDITIONS BRING ABOUT. TURNING TO EDUCATION, THE CARDINAL DENOUNCED THE "ALARMING PENETRATION OF MARXISTS AMONG THE TEACHERS". HE ATTRIBUTED THIS DEVELOPMENT TO THE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY AND SPIRITUAL LIFE ANA A PLANNED PROGRAM OF AGITATION TO TURN COLOMBIAN INTO A MARXIST STATE. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, PRESIDENT LOPEZ HAS DENOUNCED "MIDDLE-LEVEL OFFICIALS" WHO UNDERCUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMS. HE RECENTLY SIGNED A LAW CENTRALIZING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL FACETS OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, INCLUDING THE NEGOTIATION OF CONTRACTS WITH TEACHERS, WHICH PREVIIOUSLY WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS. EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE STATED THAT THE GOC INTENDS TO USE THE NEW AUTHORITY OF THE EDUCATION LAW TO ROOT OUT COMMUNIST AGITATORS AMONG TEACHERS AND TO PUT CLAMPS ON THE EXTREME LEFTIST-CONTROLLED NATIONAL TEACHERS FEDERATION (FECODE).

5. BOMBINGS CONTINUE. ON DECEMBER 26 TWO BOMBS EXPLODED AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CONSERVATIVE MORNING DAILY LA REPUBLICA CAUSING MINOR DAMAGE. LATE DECEMBER 30 AND EARLY DECEMBER 31 FOUR THEATERS WERE VICTIMIZED BY A SERIES OF BOMBINGS. ALTHOUGH ONE OF THE THREE THEATERS SHOWING "JAWS" WAS FULL AT THE TIME, THERE WERE NO INJURIES. POLICE SPOKESMEN SPECULATED THAT THE BOMBINGS MAY HAVE BEEN A LEFT-WING REPRISAL FOR THE SERIES OF EARLIER BOMBINGS OF LEFTIST FACILITIES REPORTEDLY CARRIED OUT BY A RIGHT-WING ORGANIZATION (BOGOTA 11927, DEC. 12, 1975).
THEY ALSO OPINED THAT, SINCE THE THEATERS ALL CARRY "METRO" IN THEIR NAMES, THE PERPETRATORS MISTAKENLY MAY HAVE THOUGHT THE THEATERS BELONG TO METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER.

6. INFLATION SLOWS. AT YEAR-END THE 1975 INFLATION RATE AS MEASURED BY THE WORKERS' CONSUMER PRICE INDEX WAS 17.9 PERCENT,
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THUS MEETING THE ADMINISTRATION'S GOAL FOR THE PAST YEAR TO LOWER THE 25.2 PERCENT 1974 RATE TO BELOW 20 PERCENT. THE 1976 TARGET INFLATION RATE IS 15 PERCENT.
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